

Casemate

Spotlight
Event

Bowling Benefit

A Fort Monroe Bowl-A-Thon scheduled for Jan. 15 will raise funds for local veterans hospitals.

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Pride ... Growth ... Great Performances ... 2004 Year in Review

BY PATRICK BUFFETT
CASEMATE STAFF WRITER

It was a year of pride as community members joined a special project that urged "ownership" of historic Fort Monroe's beautification and environmental protection efforts.

It was a year of great performances, with concerts featuring legendary rock group REO Speedwagon, country megastar Terri Clark, and the dynamite singing duo Matt and Christina Saffron Ashford.

And, more importantly, it was a year of growth as the post funneled \$9.4 million into new construction alone, which resulted in 14 new buildings that have either been completed or are in the process of being built.

"In some aspects, 2004 seemed like a blur," summarized Col. Perry D. Allmendinger, garrison commander. "One event bled into another and then another, and it's not easy to pick any one moment that stands out more than the rest."

Anyone who knows the commander, or has attended one of the town hall meetings he hosted over the past year, could probably guess what's coming next ... it's the one accomplishment Fort Monroe "must never forget," in his words.

"In my opinion, Hurricane Isabel recovery is still at the top of the list as far as significant accomplishments over the past year," the colonel said. "I know that sounds repetitive ... we discussed it a

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\$336K Bay Breeze improvement project begins

BY PATRICK BUFFETT
CASEMATE STAFF WRITER

A \$336,000 renovation and building maintenance project is underway at Fort Monroe's Bay Breeze Community Center.

With a projected completion date of "somewhere around" April 1, according to facility manager, Don Houchins, the rebuild includes a new heating and air conditioning system and a total renovation of the primary customer

restrooms at the front of the building.

"One of the aspects of the project that I think is particularly noteworthy is the direct benefit to our customers," Houchins said. "The new HVAC system will give us total control of the temperature in our conference areas, and the newly fitted men's and ladies' rooms will seriously improve the general appearance of our facility. The bottom line is more comfort for our patrons."

The ongoing project will also include some "self help, touch up" work, such as repainting and carpet cleaning, Houchins added.

Even though the Bay Breeze conference areas will remain closed throughout the renovation, the facility manager emphasized that its catering service will continue to accept reservations for weddings, family reunions, on-site work luncheons and other business gatherings.

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Fort Monroe Blood Drive, Jan. 10, 9 a.m., Community Activities Center

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great deal at the end of last year ... but consider for a moment what happened to this post just 16 months ago and where we're at now."

On Sept. 18, 2003, storm surge from the category II Isabel made Monroe "one with the Chesapeake Bay," as post officials described the situation back then. Parts of the seawall were destroyed. Corrosive salt water seeped into electrical outlets, furnaces and AC units. And everything below the four-foot mark in nearly half of the buildings on post was destroyed.

"Think back to that moment when you returned to work (after the hurricane) and realized that it would all have to be rebuilt," Allmendinger said. "Or, for those in post housing who stuck it out here during the storm, remember your basements, storage areas and first floor living spaces filling up with water and the damage that caused.

"Much of the infrastructure was devastated," he continued. "And it was clear that, when it came to recovery, we were in it for the long haul.

"But look around you now," the colonel challenged. "Most visitors who come to Monroe today are quick to point out the post's success in erasing all signs of Isabel. They marvel over the landscaping and the removal of numerous 1932-era buildings that had outlived their usefulness."

The past year also brought new piers along the seawall; a newly renovated gazebo at Continental Park; and new office buildings that are now serving, or will soon serve, organizations like Fort Monroe's Joint Task Force – Civil Support, the Futures Center, Cadet Command and Army Community Services. Even the most heavily damaged structures, such as Building 5 inside the moat, have been refitted with sleek new offices that belie the ravages of Isabel.

"Behind the scenes, we've replaced 82 percent of the AC units and 63 percent of the furnaces in post housing," Allmendinger explained as he glanced at a DPW briefing slide that confirmed his statistics. "More than half of the roofs atop our administrative buildings have been replaced or repaired. The list goes on and on, but I think that already speaks volumes about the enormous progress we've made over the past year."

Allmendinger is also quick to point out the impact Isabel had on Fort Monroe's sense of community. In the wake of the storm, neighbor

helped neighbor regardless of rank, duty section or branch of service. "We established a connection that is sometimes lost on an installation containing many different agencies with diverse missions," he said. "And I think that feeling of unity is going to last well into our future. What we've overcome, we overcame together, and we should be proud."

In March of 2004, post strategic planners parlayed the intensified sense of community resulting from Isabel into an installation-wide campaign that invites open participation in Monroe's beautification and environmental protection efforts. Aptly named "Project Pride," the campaign continues to stress "personal ownership" of post improvement programs.

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Col. Perry D. Allmendinger
GARRISON COMMANDER

"Project Pride has changed the way we look at cleanliness and environmental stewardship by shifting the responsibility from 'them' to 'me,'" Allmendinger said. "We've witnessed a steady increase in community members who are rolling up their collective sleeves to get involved. And anyone who doesn't believe that should show up at one of our Clean Sweep Walks that now draw as many as 50 participants each month."

The walks are conducted every third Tuesday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., starting at the Fitness Center.

"Project Pride has also revitalized our 'adopt-a-spot' and neighborhood mayoral programs," the colonel added. "It's a tremendous program, and I think it should be adopted everywhere. The slogan, 'I keep Fort (insert name here) Clean and Beautiful,' could be translated to any Army installation."

Community participation in post programs was also promoted over the past year with the introduction of the newly established "Listening Post" system locally, and the internet-driven "Interactive Customer Evaluation" system that's being tested at DoD level. Described as "empowerment" tools by the Plans, Analysis and Integration Office here, both customer comment systems are meant for "meat and potato" questions, suggestions, and even complaints that could have a meaningful impact on installation operations and services.

"I think these programs are noteworthy because of their potential to shape the future of Fort Monroe," Allmendinger said. "We can't fix it if we don't know that it's broken, and we can't build it better if we have no idea what the customer really wants."

The colonel used Fitside Perk – the new coffee shop that opened in the Fitness Center in July 2004 – as an example. "It was the result of customer feedback," he said. "Our Morale, Welfare and Recreation folks listened to your input and provided a service that's unique among Army installations."

Community members can find more information about ICE and the Listening Post on the Fort Monroe homepage at www.monroe.army.mil/monroe.

The installation's continuing summer concert series is also high on the garrison commander's list of memorable 2004 moments. Classic rock group REO Speedwagon kicked off the second annual, three-concert lineup with a Memorial Day weekend performance that drew an estimated crowd of 5,000. Other headliners included Terri Clark with opening act Dierks Bentley – the 4th of July weekend performance – and Vertical Horizon with opening band Stroke 9 – highlighting the Columbus Day weekend show.

"Like the previous year, we were treated to a big-name lineup and some absolutely first-rate entertainment," Allmendinger said. "I was a bit disappointed by the turnout for the latter shows, but that's a challenge I think we're going to overcome as the series continues."

Counting on the loyalty of classic rock and country fans, Fort Monroe has pretty much assured itself larger crowds for the 2005 season, with anticipated performances by the Doobie Brothers, Diamond Rio and Trace Atkins – who recently released his sixth album and will spend the coming year touring with hot country duo Montgomery Gentry.

Great Musical Moments



"We're very excited about the upcoming series, and I think every member of the Fort Monroe community should take pride in the vote of confidence we've been given by the City of Hampton and surrounding communities," Allmendinger said. "There are several venues on this side of the tunnel that are equally suited for these shows, but our installation remains the site of choice because of our proven track record for hosting safe and well-managed events.

"We're also commended time and again for the appearance of our installation," the colonel

added, "and, alluding to what I said earlier, that's a direct reflection of the pride in our community."

Allmendinger also congratulated The U.S. Continental Army Band for their stellar "Music Under The Stars" concert series over the past summer. Patiently working around renovation work at the Continental Park Gazebo, the band "set the (guest performance) bar" higher than it has ever been during their 2004 season. Visiting groups included the Boston Brass and U.S. Army Chorus, as well as two separate appearances by

television soap opera star Matt Ashford and accomplished Broadway performer Christina Saffron Ashford.

"I have heard nothing but positive feedback about the band's performances, big or small," the commander said. "And they deserve our thanks because they're out there in the community a lot, representing the U.S. Army Soldier. Their level of professionalism is the mark that the American public has set for its armed forces."

It was clear that another of the commander's
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comfort zones had been reached. Complimenting the Soldiers and civilian employees of Fort Monroe seemed as easy to him as a discussion about the weather. The staff of the plans and integration office again popped up in conversation, as did the installation's school liaison officer. He spoke highly of his "go to" guys at the Directorate of Public Works and Logistics and the Directorate of Resource Management. The colonel also acknowledged the "excellent teamwork and support" of agencies like the Northeast Region Office, Headquarters TRADOC and JTF-CS during 2004.

"And I can't leave out the Soldiers of the 233rd Military Police Detachment," he said. "They're such an important part of this community not only because of their force protection efforts, but also as Soldier representatives during countless ceremonies and events both on and off the installation."

The colonel remembered the troops of 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment who "became part of the Fort Monroe family" during their year-long deployment as part of Operation Noble Eagle. The National Guard unit returned to its home station of Roanoke, Va., in April.

"It was also our privilege in June 2004 to recognize three military working dog teams from TRADOC for their accomplishments in Iraq and Afghanistan," Allmendinger said. "Those events were particularly significant because of their connection with the ongoing Global War on Terrorism – a topic that practically every news agency in the country has discussed over the past week as they review the important moments of 2004."

"Any way you slice it, each of us plays an important role,"

Col. Perry D. Allmendinger

GARRISON COMMANDER

"As we head into 2005, we should reflect on our contributions to the war," the colonel continued.

"You might be part of the Headquarters TRADOC team that assures quality training of our Soldiers and does whatever else is necessary to insure our troops go into combat well prepared. You might be part of the NERO team that focuses on quality facilities and wellness programs for Soldiers and families. You might be part of a support network that maintains troop health or keeps personnel files up to date so Soldiers get paid and promoted on time.

"Any way you slice it, each of us plays an important role," Allmendinger said. "Even our families and retirees deserve credit for their love and support. All of those things are included when you talk about the success of America's Army."

As for other aspects of 2005, Allmendinger said he hopes the community will focus on the positives – such as the work that will soon begin on the Chamberlin Hotel or the soon-to-come main access gate project that promises to improve traffic flow into the installation – and not get caught up in the hype associated with the BRAC decision.

"Let's just do our job and stay strong as a community," he said. "A project has just begun that will eventually result in 89 new family housing units at Fort Monroe. Our new ACS building is opening soon. And it won't be long before our new addition to the Child Development Center will be completed. Those are the sorts of things that should generate excitement among our families and workforce."



The Year of the Soldier

